

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH
AT TOMARZA, CAPPADOCIA

A STUDY BASED ON PHOTOGRAPHS
TAKEN IN 1909 BY GERTRUDE BELL

STEPHEN HILL

TOMARZA is a village situated forty kilometers southeast of Kayseri in a small plain north of Söveğen Dağ (see fig. A). It was the seat of the Armenian bishop, and at the turn of this century possessed two churches, the Armenian cathedral, and the Early Christian church which will be discussed here. The village of Söveğen, eleven kilometers southeast of Tomarza, may have been the ancient Sebagenä on the Carmalas River (Yenice İrmak), the boundary of that part of Cappadocia centered on Caesarea and called Cilicia. A usable pass over the Taurus runs from Sis to Kayseri via Söveğen and Tomarza, although it seems that the more important ancient route may have been farther to the north and west. This part of Cappadocia was, in any event, open to communication with the regions to the south, especially Cilicia and northern Syria.

The first scholar to devote any serious attention to the early church at Tomarza was Hans Rott, who visited the site in October 1906.¹ Rott published the only description of the building which has survived, three photographs, and the groundplan that is reproduced here (slightly redrawn) as figure F. The church was visited in June 1909 by Gertrude Bell who gave no description of the building, but it seems possible that her original intention was to write an article on it, since in the year of her visit she wrote: "I shall, shortly, publish the photographs of Tomarza."² She did, in fact, publish three photographs two years later,³ but these were simply illustrations in a travelogue, and it is hard to believe that she did not have more significant intentions for her photographs of such an interesting building. One further photograph, a murky view of the interior of the church, was published by G. de Jerphanion, but he also left no account of his visit.⁴

¹ The village was visited by several scholars in the years 1906 and 1907. Hans Rott published descriptions of the Early Christian church in two places in 1908: "Bauspäne von einer anatolischen Reise," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Architektur*, 1 (1907–8), 140–67, esp. 160–61, figs. 11a, 11b; *idem*, *Kleinasiatische Denkmäler aus Pisidien, Pamphylien, Kappadokien, und Lykien* (Leipzig, 1908), 180–87, figs. 59–62 (hereafter, *Denkmäler*). The latter citation contains the fuller description. Rott gives the appellation "Panagia" without explanation.

Two travelers had previously visited Tomarza: J. R. S. Sterrett, *The Wolfe Expedition to Asia Minor during the Summer of 1885*, American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Papers, 3, 1884–1885 (Boston, 1888), 64; A. M. Lebedes, *Αἱ ἐν μοναίσοις μοναὶ τῆς Καππαδοκίας καὶ Λυκαωνίας* (Istanbul, 1899), 64.

For the Armenian cathedral, see Rott, *Denkmäler*, 179–82, fig. 58; H. Grothe, *Meine Vorderasien-expedition 1906 und 1907* (Leipzig, 1911 and 1912), II, text fig. 19; and photograph 031 (not reproduced here) in the Gertrude Bell Collection.

I am indebted to Mr. Alistair Elliot, Keeper of the Special Collections of the University Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, for granting me access to the Gertrude Bell Special Collection, and for allowing me to publish the material presented here. I wish to thank also Professor R. Martin Harrison for his comments when this article was in draft stage, and Professors Richard Krautheimer and Hugo Buchthal for help and encouragement. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Mrs. Buchthal for providing the human figures for scale in the drawings.

² W. M. Ramsay and Gertrude L. Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches* (London, 1909), 442.

³ Gertrude L. Bell, *Amurath to Amurath* (London, 1911), 345–46, pls. 220–22.

⁴ "Cappadocia," *Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti*, VIII (Rome, 1930), 884–86.

The church was destroyed by fire in about 1921; Guyer provided the information about the means,⁵ and Krautheimer produced the date.⁶ This sad information is all that has significantly been added to our knowledge of the church in the years since Rott's visit. His expectation that most of the building would survive for several centuries is now no more than a poignant irony.⁷

The University Library of Newcastle upon Tyne was fortunate to receive from her stepsister, some years after her death, Gertrude Bell's photographic collection. This material contains no less than forty photographs of the lost church.⁸ On the basis of this hitherto neglected archive, I wish to reopen the record for this interesting Early Christian monument, and thus supplement the photographs published by Rott which were, as Guyer observed, tragically few.⁹ The majority of the Bell photographs are of excellent quality, especially considering their age and the unfavorable circumstances during which they were taken, and it has proved possible to use them in conjunction with Rott's plan to rescue a tentative reconstruction of the elevations and of the sections of the church (figs. C–E).¹⁰ Rott's plan was probably simplistic, but the church, as Guyer observed, was a symmetrical building,¹¹ and it has seemed reasonable to trust Rott with regard to overall dimensions. The elevations are presented here at the same scale as that at which Rott published his plan: this involves the omission of some details which might have been included, such as the positioning of the masonry courses still standing in 1909, but avoids the compounding of any small, undetectable errors which might be present in the only plan now available.

The church at Tomarza was a particularly well developed example of the central Anatolian cross-church; more specifically, it was the most perfect specimen of a group of churches found in western Cappadocia in the area around Kayseri. The most significant cognate monuments are the church of the Panagia at Pesek (Büslük Fesek), a few miles north of Tomarza,¹² and the church of the Forty Martyrs at Küçük Bürüngün which was demolished in

⁵ S. Guyer, *Grundlagen mittelalterlicher abendländischer Baukunst* (Einsiedeln, 1950), 53 (hereafter *Grundlagen*). It is curious that this is the first reference to the destruction of the building, since Guyer had mentioned the church at Tomarza twice before: "Die Bedeutung der christlichen Baukunst der Inneren Kleinasien für die allgemeine Kunstgeschichte," *BZ*, 33 (1933), 78–104, 313–30, esp. 87, 319; "Les monuments chrétiens en Asie Mineure," *Atti del III Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana, Ravenna, 1932* (Rome, 1934), 433–58.

⁶ R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Baltimore, 1965), 123 (and personal correspondence). He was given this date by the inhabitants of Tomarza during his visit to Turkey in 1954.

⁷ Rott, *Denkmäler*, 182.

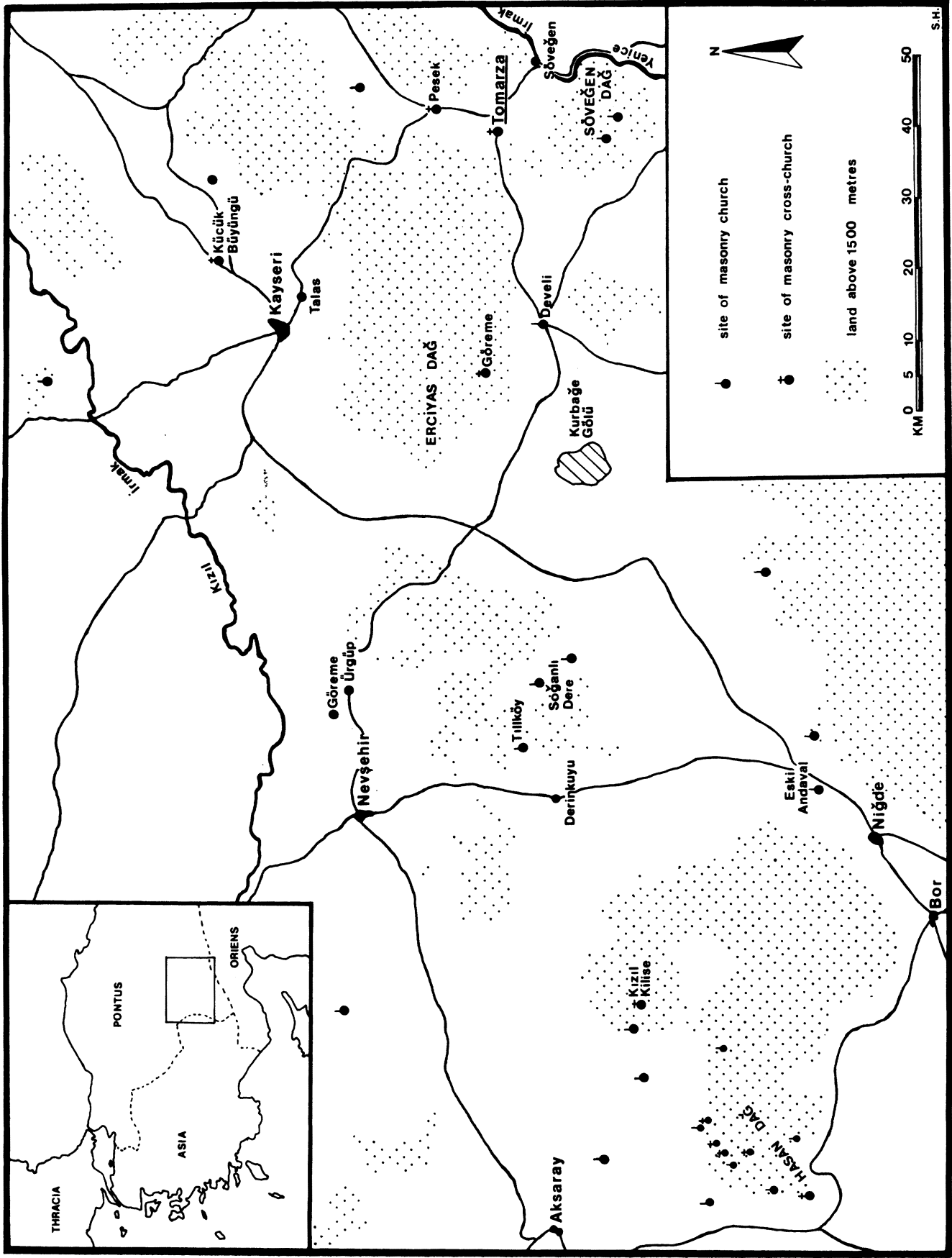
⁸ Of which thirty-one are here reproduced (fig. 1 is a composite view) by permission of the University Library, Newcastle upon Tyne. Their serial numbers in the Bell Collection are 032–068. The nine photographs which are not printed here either duplicate information in those which are printed, or are of such poor photographic quality as to be worthless. Unfortunately, several of the few views of the interior fall into this latter category. It is my intention to publish a more extensive study of this archive.

⁹ *Grundlagen*, 53.

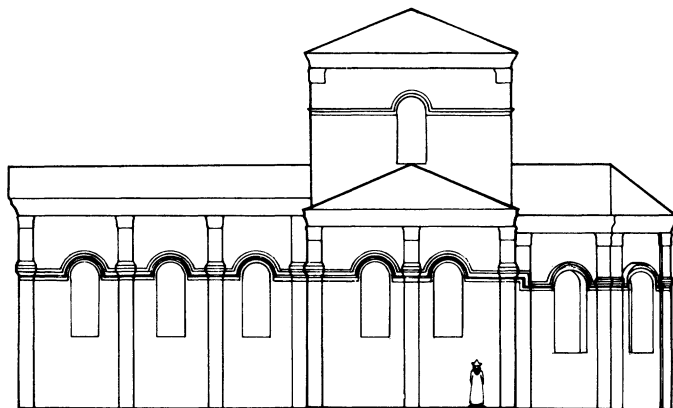
¹⁰ The technique for this process is conveniently set out in J. C. C. Williams, *Simple Photogrammetry* (London-New York, 1969), esp. chap. 18, pp. 181–95, "Old Photographs of Buildings."

¹¹ Guyer, *Grundlagen*, 53.

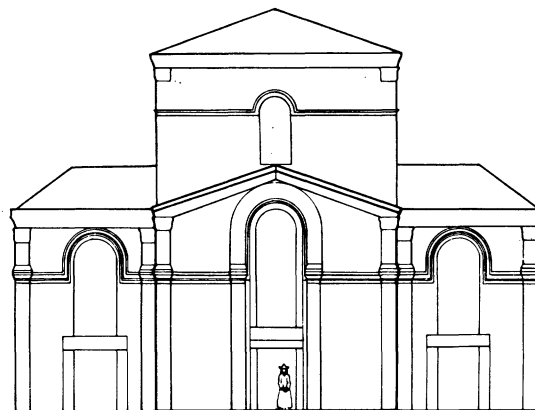
¹² Rott, *Denkmäler*, 188–90, pls. 63–64.



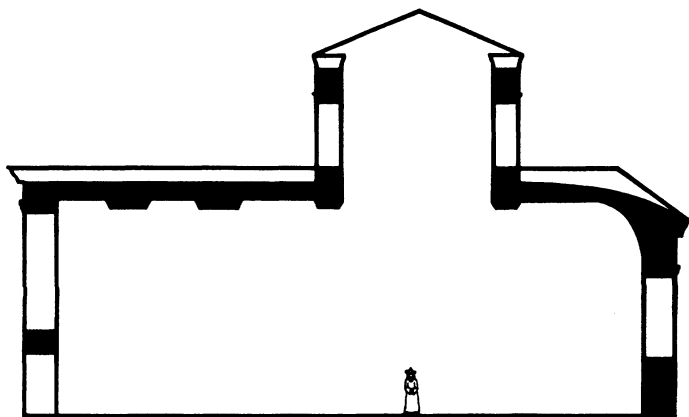
A. Southern Cappadocia



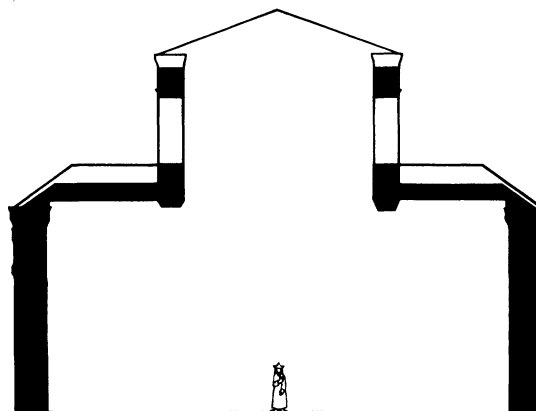
B. South Elevation



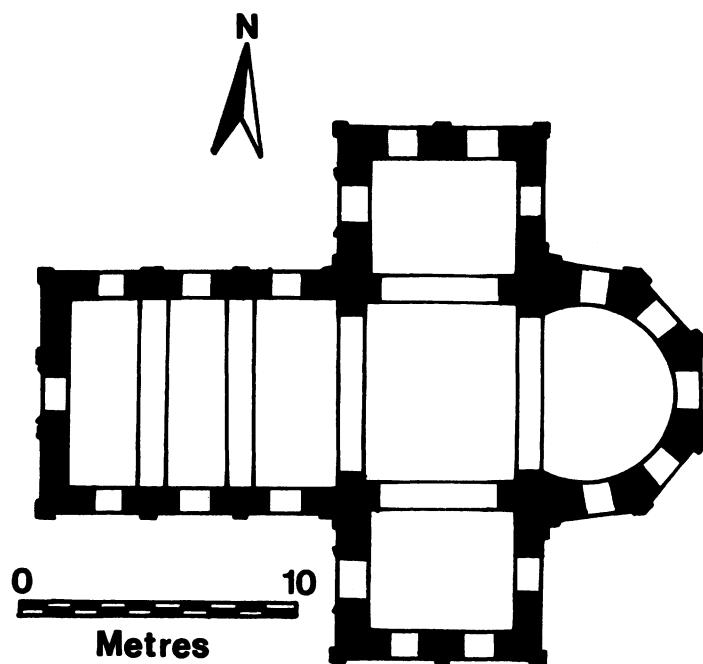
D. West Elevation



C. Longitudinal Section



E. Transverse Section



F. Ground Plan

Tomarza, Church

(Drawings made to scale)

1954.¹³ Two churches at Göreme on Erciyas Dağ exhibit the prominent string-course running above the windows, but lack the pilasters of Tomarza and the others.¹⁴ Of the two, Çanlikilise is another cross-church, but the church of the Panagia is a basilica of a form which may have been characteristically Cappadocian, longer on the north-south axis than the east-west.¹⁵ That this style of architecture appeared in Caesarea itself is proved by the remains of a church, probably a basilica, in Kayseri which was seen by Gabriel and Deichmann.¹⁶

The basic plan of our building was straightforward: three arms radiated to the north, south, and west from the central crossing which was surmounted by a low tower. The western arm was longer than the two transept arms, and the apse was appended directly onto the eastern side of the crossing. The apse, though clearly pentagonal on the exterior, formed a horseshoe sector of a circle inside, and there were no side-chambers. This precise arrangement of the apse was universal in Cappadocia in Early Christian churches of whatever overall plan,¹⁷ although Tomarza was an exception to the less rigidly applied rule that three windows pierce the eastern sides, while the two most westerly tangents of the apse were left solid, and perhaps decorated with blind niches. The piercing of windows through all five sides of the apse at Tomarza is without parallel in the immediate vicinity.

Doors led into the western sides of the nave and transept arms, and it seems from beam holes cut into the pilasters supporting the arches of the crossing that the three arms were separated at some time from the central bay, which may thus have been part of the sanctuary area along with the apse. The transept arms, with their own separate entrances, may accordingly have served the same purpose as the side aisles in a basilica. It is, of course, impossible to say whether the screening off of the central bay, either by some wooden structure or by curtains, was contemporary with the original occupation of the church. In any case, the performance of elaborate liturgy in such a building cannot have been easy, and it is interesting to observe that at some later point it was found necessary to construct a narthex or addition to the west end of the nave. The traces of this can be seen in figure 2 in the form of cuttings into the moldings and pilasters of the west façade. The addition appears to have possessed two stories, the upper of which would have afforded an excellent view along the nave through the great window above the western entrance. The narthex was not a regular feature of Cappadocian churches in the Early Christian period, but one may reasonably suppose that this addition was a response to the exigencies which demanded the construction of side-chambers in the church at Küçük Bürüngün not long

¹³ *Ibid.*, 192–99, pls. 65–68; de Jerphanion, *loc. cit.*, pl. 209.

¹⁴ Rott, *Denkmäler*, 163–70, pls. 51–55.

¹⁵ Compare the basilicas at Eski Andaval, and possibly Çardağ Köy. *Ibid.*, 104, pl. 30; J. Strzygowski, *Kleinasien, ein Neuland der Kunstgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1903), 68, pl. 60.

¹⁶ A. Gabriel, *Monuments turcs d'Anatolie*, I (Paris, 1931), pl. 27; F. W. Deichmann, "Ergebnisse einer Kleinasiatischen Reise," *AA*, 53 (1938), 205–26, esp. 223–26, pls. 17–18.

¹⁷ The side-chambers at Küçük Bürüngün were added after the completion of the church, but probably not much later since they were designed and built so completely in harmony with the architecture of the rest of the structure.

after its completion. The narthex at Tomarza may have answered some of the storage problems created by the lack of prothesis and diakonikon, and since it had a second floor, it is also possible that it may have served as a small gynaikeion gallery.

All three arms were roofed with barrel vaults. In the case of the nave, the barrel-vault was strengthened by two rib-arches which sprang from corbels. The apse was covered with a semidome. This semidome and the three barrel vaults were themselves protected by wooden ridge-roofs which left their mark on the exterior walls of the tower at the point of juncture (see fig. 4).

Rott thought that the crossing was surmounted by a cupola of light, volcanic stone, and stated that its curve began at the level of the springing of the arches of the windows in the tower. Gertrude Bell wrote: "Rott states that he found an example of the continuous sphere at Tomarza. Its existence at so early a date in the centre of Asia Minor was a surprise to me; I visited the church myself in 1909 and found that Rott's statement is not correct. The dome has fallen, but the four corbel stones, set across the angles of the rectangular substructure, are all in place and the construction is therefore the same as that used in the oldest Kara Dagħ domes."¹⁸ Both writers propose to erect a stone dome on the tiny brackets at the corners of the tower (figs. 15–17). Gertrude Bell is referring to the primitive "squinces" which she found supporting the small dome of chapel no. 9 at Maden Şehir (Binbirkilise), and also supporting the semidomes in the apses of the great monastery of Mahalaç on the summit of Kara Dağ, and in the small chapel at Cenet Deresi in Cilicia Tracheia.¹⁹ All these domes are considerably smaller than that at Tomarza would have been, while the corbels are proportionately much larger and therefore stronger.

Much more informative in this respect is the relationship of the church at Tomarza with an important group of monuments in Cilicia Tracheia which have been studied by Forsyth and Gough.²⁰ None of these buildings was a cross-church, but all share with Tomarza the feature of the central tower. The relationship of Tomarza with the east church at Alahan is particularly interesting. The overall measurement of the tower at Tomarza was 8.5 by 7.5 m., whereas that at Alahan is *ca.* 8.0 by 7.5 m. The tower walls were *ca.* 0.85 m. thick at Tomarza, and *ca.* 0.65 m. thick at Alahan. The corner brackets at Alahan are considerably larger and more impressive. Forsyth's remarks concerning the roofing of the tower of Koca Kalesi are relevant to our building:

¹⁸ Ramsay and Bell, *op. cit.*, 442; see also Rott, *Denkmäler*, 183.

¹⁹ Ramsay and Bell, *op. cit.*, 80, fig. 42 (Binbirkilise, no. 9), fig. 205 (Mahalaç); Gertrude L. Bell, "Notes on a Journey through Cilicia and Lycaonia," *RA*, ser. 4, vol. 8 (1906), 30–31, fig. 24 (Cenet Deresi). In the case of the chapel at Cenet Deresi, the block is curved on its outer face in order to carry the molding from which the semidome springs.

²⁰ G. H. Forsyth, "Architectural Notes on a Journey through Cilicia," *DOP*, 11 (1957), 223–36; M. R. E. Gough, "Excavations at Alahan Monastery—Third Preliminary Report," *AnatSt*, 14 (1964), 183–90, esp. 186 (hereafter, "Alahan III"); *idem*, "The Emperor Zeno and some Cilician Churches," *AnatSt*, 22 (1972), 199–212.

Surely the tower was not designed for a dome and was never covered by a vault of any kind. For one thing, Headlam noted that no fragments of such a structure can be found among the debris in the church. Even more convincing is the fact that the main body of the tower, far from having the massive walls needed to support . . . a span of 6 m., is remarkable for its structural lightness, which amounts almost to delicacy. In particular its walls are no thicker than those used elsewhere in the church to support roofs of wood, the existence of which is proven by beam holes. It is also evident that the elegant corner niches of the tower could not possibly have carried their share of a dome's weight. To my mind, the true solution is the simplest one, namely a squat, pyramidal, wooden roof with flattened half pyramids at the corners.²¹

Forsyth was arguing on purely architectural grounds toward a conclusion which was subsequently proven archaeologically by Gough's excavations.²² Apart from the proviso that the arms at Tomarza were covered by barrel vaults, one could extend Forsyth's observations on Alahan to cover Tomarza also. But in one respect the position at Tomarza is more subtle: the walls of the nave are less thick (*ca.* 0.90 m.) than those of the transept arms (*ca.* 1.15 m.), presumably because the nave's vault was further strengthened by its rib-arches. The apse walls which support a semidome are still thicker (*ca.* 1.30 m.). But the walls of the tower are marginally thinner even than those of the nave.²³ It would seem most remarkable if the walls intended to support a stone dome with a span of 6.5 m. were the least substantial in the whole structure, especially when pierced by windows and completely without the buttressing provided by the pilasters on the walls of the lower parts of the building. Rott's mention that the dome was "aus leichtem schwarzem Vulkan-gestein" may have no more significance in fact than to describe the use of a shade of trachyte different from the red and white employed in the more noticeable parts of the building. The Cappadocian trachyte is itself light and volcanic, ideally suited to building purposes, and in a range of colors from pink to dark grey as well as white. Its suitability even for the construction of domes is shown by the well-preserved Kızıl Kilise near Gelveri on the Hasan Dağ.²⁴

Little more can be said about the details of the interior than what has already been noted. It is clear from figure 14 that Rott's plan is slightly misleading, as it shows offsets in the long walls of the nave apparently supporting the rib-arches of the barrel vault. The figure also clearly shows a rib-arch projecting abruptly from the sidewall at the same level as the springing of the barrel vault. This rib-arch was thus supported by a sort of console with a curved underside which Rott observes was decorated with lancets, of which the

²¹ Forsyth, *op. cit.*, 230–31.

²² "Alahan III," 186.

²³ It is now impossible to be absolutely precise about these measurements, but the relative thicknesses are clearly visible on Rott's plan.

²⁴ Ramsay and Bell, *op. cit.*, 376–90. Gertrude Bell refers to the Kızıl Kilise as Sivri Hissar, which is the name of a small settlement between Gelveri and the church.

central one was widened into a cross shape.²⁵ Unfortunately, these details are scarcely visible in the photograph. Actually, the nave was uncluttered by pilasters on its interior wall, but its barrel vault was strengthened by rib-arches which were themselves buttressed by the pilasters on the outer faces of the walls. The architectural scheme of the exterior was thus functional as well as decorative.

The arches at the crossing did rise from pilasters which had simply molded capitals and bases (figs. 7–11). As the arches at the mouth of the apse and at the east end of the nave were wider than those opening into the transept-arms, the former were sprung at a lower level in order to achieve the same overall height. All the arches at the crossing were slightly horseshoe in shape, and had a simple molding very similar to that which framed the windows on the exterior. Figure 9 shows the precise relationship of the arch at the mouth of the northern transept-arm with the arches separating nave from apse: the manner in which the moldings overlap seems unnecessarily clumsy.²⁶ It is clear from figure 7 that in at least one case, the arch between nave and crossing, there was a molding only on one face, that on the east side. This was presumably because on the other side the barrel vault of the nave was coincident with the second course of voussoirs in the arch.

A comparison of figures 8 and 9 shows the one inconsistency in this otherwise completely symmetrical building. In the southern transept-arm a molding, corresponding to the cornice outside, ran round the chamber on three sides (figs. 8, 12, 13), broken at one point by the voussoirs in the arch of the window above the door in the west wall. This molding was not present in the northern transept-arm.

Rott recorded a graffito scratched on the inner side of the east wall of the northern transept-arm:²⁷

Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθ(ει) τὸ(ν) δούλο(ν) σου Θ[εο]-
φ[ο]ίλακτο(ν) κε λύτ[ρω]-
σο(ν) αὐτὸν ἀπὸ πάσης
ἀνάγκης

A row of graffito crosses is also visible in the photographs of the north façade of the church: these are rough and irregularly spaced, and therefore were presumably secondary, casual doodlings rather than some form of consecration sign contemporary with the building program.

I include, for the sake of completeness, figures 29–31 which are photographs of stones built into the Turkish field-wall surrounding the church. One stone (fig. 29) has a graffito of an archer, and was presumably unconnected with the church. The date and function of the three remaining stones is unclear; they may have been part of the furnishings of the church, and the largest block may have supported an altar.

²⁵ Rott, *Denkmäler*, 183.

²⁶ An exactly similar arrangement may be seen in the central octagon of the cross-church at Qal'at Sim'an. See J. Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie* (Paris, 1947), pl. xxv.4.

²⁷ Rott, *Denkmäler*, 186.

The details of the exterior are for the most part sufficiently clear. The foundation course (just visible in fig. 2 at the northern corner of the west façade) projected slightly beyond the area delimited by the walls of the building to accommodate the simple base moldings of the pilasters. These pilasters rose in two orders, interrupted by the stringcourse which ran at the level of the springing of the window arches. As has been noted, the pilasters on the north and south walls of the nave corresponded to the rib-arches of the barrel vault; otherwise the pilasters were entirely without structural significance. There was no precise substitute for a capital at the level of the stringcourse, which in fact ran unbroken around the building. There was, however, a base for the stumpy second order of pilasters, and the whole complex of stringcourse and pilaster bulged out at the point of junction. The second order of pilasters was surmounted by capitals of at least two different types (figs. 6, 18–20), except at the point where the nave intersected the transept-arms. The most easterly pilaster on either side of the western arm of the building continues upward to touch the cornice: this system avoided the awkward problem of how to juxtapose two pilaster capitals in a reentrant angle. The two forms of capital were most clearly visible on corners of the apse: one type had two or three registers of finely carved acanthus leaves (fig. 19); the other was decorated with curious elongated loops (fig. 20). A pair of similarly different capitals could be seen on the north face of the northern transept arm (fig. 18), but it is impossible to establish from the few capitals visible in situ whether there was any systematized arrangement of capitals, or, indeed, how many types there were.

The capitals carried a cornice which presumably ran completely round the building (it would have had to have risen to an apex at the west end in order to surmount the great west window). The profile of this cornice consisted of two bowed-out units. The lower half was painted with polychrome stripes to resemble the carved vertical tongue ornament of the upper half (figs. 18 and 20). Rott notes that the carved tongues in the upper register were egg-shaped at their ends, and were colored red and blue.²⁸

There were three windows almost 3 m. high on either side of the nave, two on the outer faces of the transept-arms, and one each on the eastern sides of the transept-arms. These windows, as well as their stringcourses, were all at the same level, even though there was a slight drop in the height above ground of the cornice surmounting the walls of the transept arms compared with that surmounting the walls of the nave. The five windows of the apse were of the same dimensions as the others, but at a lower level: the drop in the stringcourse which was necessary to accommodate this difference appears somewhat clumsy as it was effected on the first pilaster on the apse walls (figs. 3 and 5).

The western sides of the nave and transept arms had elaborate doorways surmounted by very high, narrow, arched windows. The doorway at the west end of the nave was the most elaborate of all, and was flanked by pilasters

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 182.

which stopped at the level of the stringcourse. Figure 2 shows the residual line carved in the stonework beside the high window where the pilaster might have continued; this line may have followed the arch of the window.

The architectural elaboration was much less pronounced on the tower where there were no pilasters even at the corners. Windows pierced the center of each side, and a very plain molding ran round the tower at the level of the springing of the window arches, and over the windows in the manner of the stringcourse below. Capitals three courses above the molding presumably carried a cornice. One of these was still in place in 1909 on the southeast corner (fig. 3), but it is not possible to pick out the details described by Rott, who mentioned high-stemmed acanthus on the sides, with a cross at the corner, on the arms of which sat birds. Above the acanthus there was a wavy band like an Ionic cushion.²⁹

The door frames are worthy of special note. By 1909 the decorated frame of the entrance to the northern transept had fallen, but the other doorways were still in place, even if somewhat battered. Thus, the lintel of the main door had cracked under its own weight, even though the great window above it removed external pressures on the member. This lintel had been supported by an extra vertical block inserted against the left-hand jamb. As always in Anatolia and the Syrian lands, the lintel was a rectangular block resting directly on the top surfaces of the jambs, with no mitering of the corners.

The doorway into the nave (figs. 21–23) was the most elaborately decorated part of the church. On the jambs and the lower section of the architrave was a plain rebate framed by a half-round bead-and-reel molding which was succeeded by a charming inhabited scroll design in which birds, stags, lions, goats, and perhaps a bull processed toward the center of the lintel from either side. Each animal was set within its own subrectangular compartment within the completely stylized foliage. A second astragal molding divided the inhabited scroll from another scroll design composed of tightly curled ringlets of foliage; into the center of each circle of foliage a deep hole was drilled. Above all this there rose on the architrave an extremely stylized row of long-stemmed acanthus decoration. In this a series of thick stems sprouted large five-pointed leaves halfway up their length giving the impression of a row of foliate crosses. An irregularity in layout caused the carving of half a plant on the extreme left side. The spaces between the lower halves of the stems were filled with smaller leaves. There was certainly a half-round molding between the outer scroll and the acanthus frieze, but this time it appears to have been left plain. The major decorative elements on the lintel were badly defaced by 1909, but enough remained to show how the basic composition was overlaid by three circular wreaths. The outer pair were extremely similar and consisted of wreaths closely interwoven around basketwork. Rott saw a damaged cross at the center of one of these, and there appears to have been a floral design in the center of the right-hand basket. The central medallion had suffered much more than the others; it was perhaps a slightly larger

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.



1. Tomarza, Church, Exterior from Northwest



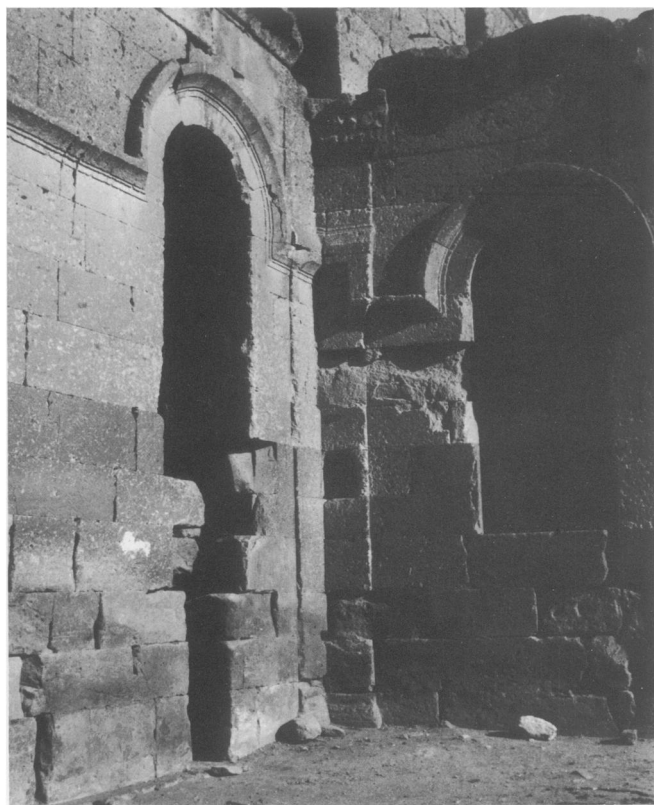
2. Exterior from West



3. Exterior from Southwest



4. Exterior from Northwest



5. Southern Transept Arm and Apse, Exterior



6. Apse, Exterior



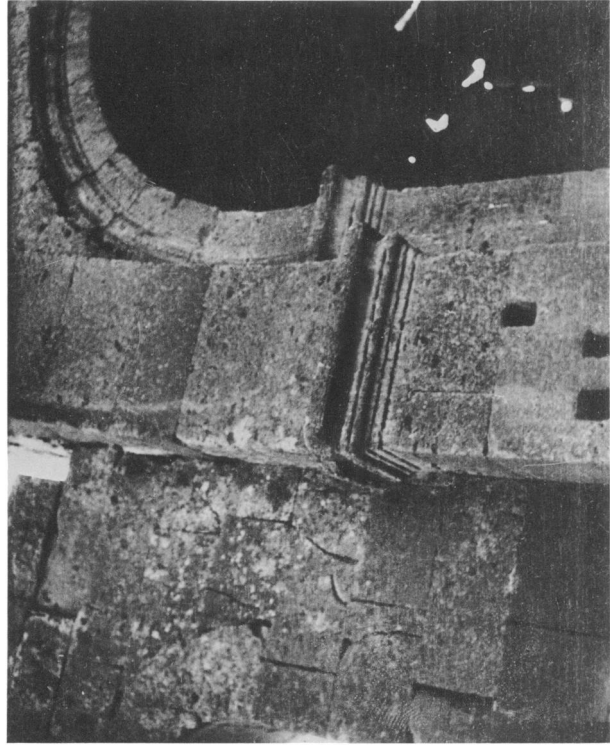
7. Interior, looking East



8. Southern Transept Arm, Interior, looking South



9. Northern Transept Arm, Interior, looking North



10. North Side

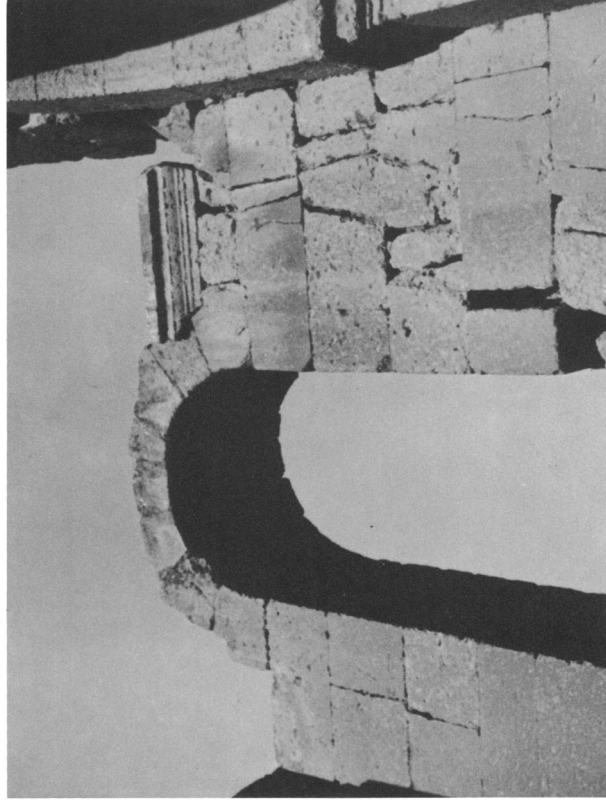
Nave, Interior, Pilaster at Crossing



11. Base



12. East Side



13. West Side

Southern Transept Arm, Interior



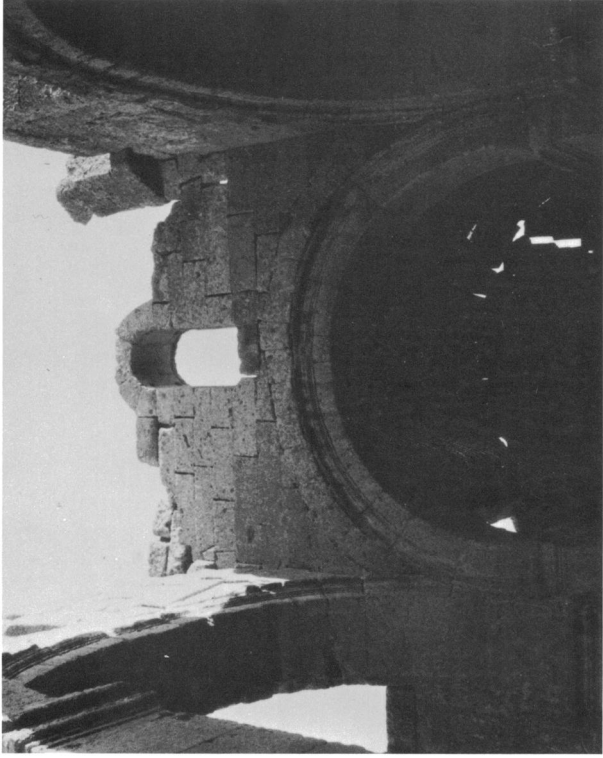
15. Tower, Interior, looking Northeast



14. Nave, Interior, Barrel Vault, South Side



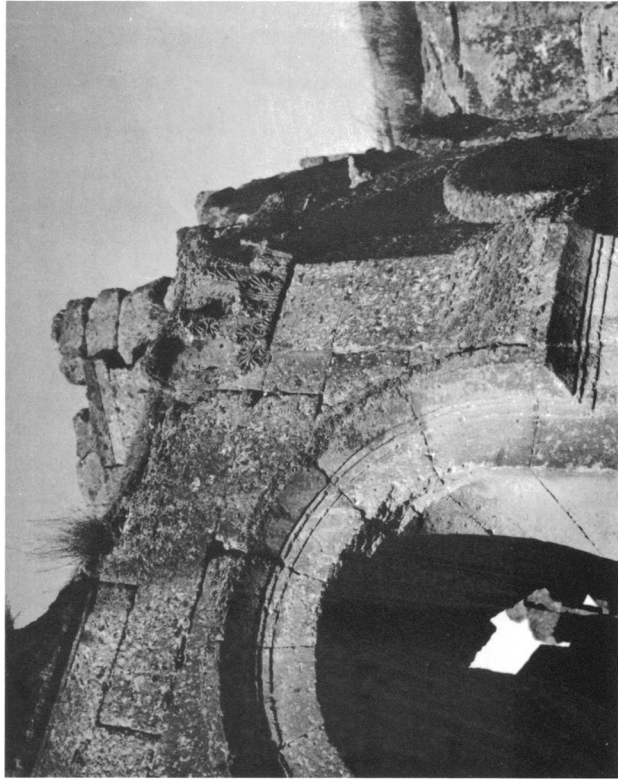
16. Tower, Interior, looking East



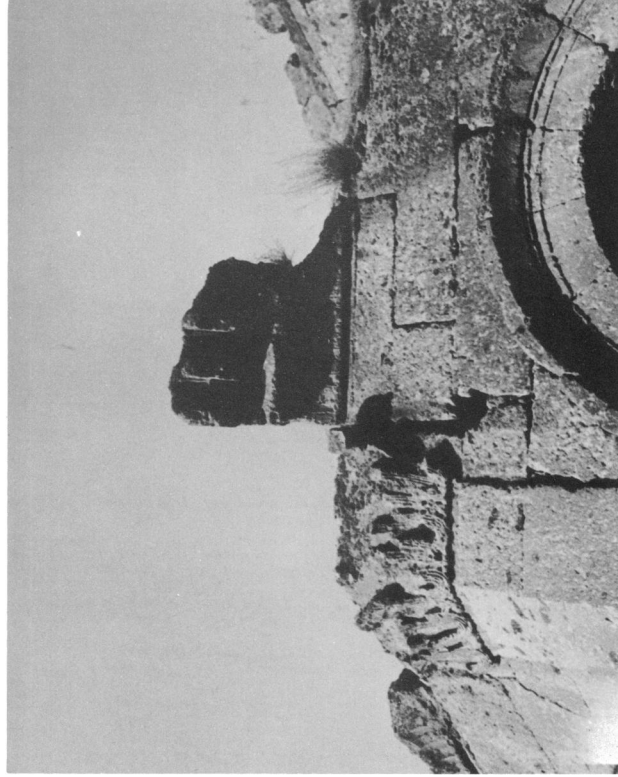
17. Tower, Interior, looking North



18. Northern Transept Arm, Exterior, North Side



19.



20.

Apse, Exterior, details



21.



22.

Main Doorway, details



23. Main Doorway, detail



24. Southern Transept Arm, Doorway, detail



25.



26.

Southern Transept Arm, Doorway, details



27. Columns, Northwest of Church



28. Columns, Northwest of Church



29. Stone in Turkish Wall



30.



31.

Stones in Turkish Wall

wreath with birds perched upon it. It seems that these medallions were damaged even in antiquity since a clumsy attempt was made to smooth the surface of the lintel.

The doorway into the southern transept lacked the extra frieze, and was perhaps a little less ambitious (figs. 24–26). Here the rebate was succeeded by a stylized scroll in which individual vine leaves were framed by circles of interwoven stem; then came a half-round molding, then a design of interlocking circles. A simple plait framed the whole composition. Again, three medallions were carved on the lintel. The two outer wreaths appear to have matched and each to have contained a sort of floral cross: each wreath had an extra leaf sprouting from its top toward the central wreath, and there were possibly birds pecking at the lower parts. The central wreath was thicker with birds perched in its leaves and pecking into it at the top. The center of the wreath was cut away. Rott noted fragments with the vine-leaf scroll which had fallen from the doorway of the northern transept arm; thus, it would seem that in this respect, as in so many others, symmetry was observed, and the doorways into the transept arms were similar to each other.³⁰

The sculptural decoration of Tomarza is very suggestive of early sixth-century work in northern Syria, and the architectural details of the building also recall Syrian examples of the late fifth and early sixth centuries. Thus, one may compare the church at Tomarza with the sixth-century church of Bizzos, at Ruweha in the Jebel Riha, which has ornamental pilasters apparently supporting moldings, and a stringcourse at the level of the springing of the window arches which curves over each window.³¹ The same features may be seen on the west church at Bakirha, the building of which is precisely dated to A.D. 501.³² The exterior of the apse of the cross-church at Qal'at Sim'an has windows with moldings identical to those at Tomarza, and also has external decorative columns. The apse of the nearby church of St. Phocas at Basufan, which is dated by an inscription to 491–92, copies the apse of the cross-church at Qal'at Sim'an which must, therefore, be an almost contemporary Zenonian building. Like the east church at Alahan, another Zenonian monument, and indirectly like Tomarza, the octagon in the cross-church at Qal'at Sim'an probably had a conical wooden roof supported by stone brackets. The baptistery at Qal'at Sim'an also displays ranges of external decorative pilasters.³³ North Syrian tombs of the sixth century are also regularly decorated with several orders of pilasters and moldings in which the pilasters often have very squat, unclassical proportions similar to those of the upper range at Tomarza. Good examples of this sort of decoration can be seen on the pyramidal tombs II and III at Il Barah.³⁴

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

³¹ *Syria*, Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904–5 and 1909. Division II: H. C. Butler, *Architecture*, Section B, *North Syria* (Leyden, 1920), 142–48.

³² *Ibid.*, 195–201.

³³ G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord. Le massif du Bélus à l'époque romaine*, I (Paris, 1953), 223–76.

³⁴ H. C. Butler, *Architecture and Other Arts*, Publications of an American Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1899–1900, II (New York, 1903), 243–45.

Elaborately decorated jambs and lintels are very unusual in Anatolia, but common in northern Syria, as is the presence of one or more medallions carved on the lintel. It should not seem surprising to find such strong Syrian influence on the Anatolian plateau, since the authority of Antioch extended to cover Cilicia and Isauria, and although Tomarza was very close to Caesarea, the metropolis of Pontus, the boundary of Pontus with Oriens was, nevertheless, also very near. Thus, this part of Cappadocia, including, as we have seen, Caesarea, was much more open to influences from Antioch than from Constantinople, and this fact was reflected in the local architecture.

The churches of Cilicia were directly subject to Antioch, and it is possible to find Syrian influence very close to southern Cappadocia. Thus the church of the Apostles at Anavarza in Cilicia Pedias has a stringcourse curving over the window arches in a manner which corresponds to the one at Tomarza so precisely that it even takes a vertical step to account for a change in the level of the building. Gough attributed this building to the reign of Justinian; it also had, like Tomarza, a classicizing modillioned cornice.³⁵ Similar window decoration may be seen on the chapel of the Virgin in Cenet Deresi, which Otto Feld has attributed to the same period as the church of the Apostles at Anavarza.³⁶

The nearest example to Tomarza of a decorated door frame of any artistic distinction with a medallion on the lintel is once more the east church at Alahan, dated to the last quarter of the fifth century, which has a cross with four flowers set in a wreath on the lintel of the main door. The feature appeared on Çanlikilise at Göreme and on the west door of the church of the Panagia at Pesek, and it is the nearby Cappadocian churches which provide the best architectural parallels to the Panagia at Tomarza, though none was so elaborate. It seems possible that the church at Tomarza was one of the earlier examples of a group of monuments flourishing in the immediate vicinity of Kayseri during the sixth century.

The close relationship of the church at Tomarza with buildings in northern Syria, Cilicia, and Isauria raises interesting possibilities.³⁷ In these regions many of the buildings which have been mentioned above share the feature that Isaurians may have been employed during their construction. This is necessarily the case with any building in Isauria or Cilicia Tracheia; thus the east church at Alahan, which may be dated to the reign of the Isaurian Emperor Zeno (474–91), is one of the finest productions of Isaurian building talent. The foreign nature of Qal'at Sim'an has been noted by scholars who have studied the complex,³⁸ and it seems quite possible that its building program may have employed at least some Isaurian workmen and planners. The complex at Qal'at Sim'an may also reasonably be attributed to the reign of Zeno, and was thus built at a time when the eminence of the Isaurian race

³⁵ M. R. E. Gough, "Anazarbus," *AnatSt*, 2 (1952), 85–150, esp. 116–18.

³⁶ "Bericht über eine Reise durch Kilikien," *IstMitt*, 13/14 (1963/64), 102–3.

³⁷ On this question, see C. Mango, "Isaurian Builders," in P. Wirth, ed., *Polychronion. Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag* (Heidelberg, 1966), 358–65; Gough, "The Emperor Zeno."

³⁸ Lassus, *op. cit.*, 262–63; Tchalenko, *op. cit.*, 263–65.

was assured. After Zeno's death, Isauria was ravaged by wars during the years 492–98, and the history of the Isaurians is thereafter one of dispersion. Thus there is evidence for the presence of Isaurian workmen at the monastery of St. Sabas near Jerusalem in 501, at the monastery of St. Symeon on the "Wondrous Mountain" near Antioch in 541–51, and at St. Sophia in Constantinople in 558. It is quite likely that exiled Isaurians would have moved to Cappadocia in search of work, especially in the vicinity of the metropolis, Caesarea, and they would have remained in that area as long as work was available. The church at Tomarza was one example in a unified group with very precise geographical limits; this admits the possibility that the group, which is exceptional in terms of the local architectural norms, was the production of one band of workers. The relationships of these buildings with monuments in areas to the south establishes their date in the sixth century, and suggests, at least in the case of Tomarza, a date early in that century, quite possibly before the year 526 when the serious earthquake at Antioch would have provided plentiful employment for building workers in the vicinity of that city.

In spite of all the southern influence, some features of the church at Tomarza stand out as characteristically Anatolian. Most striking of these is the plan, but there was in Tomarza an interest in coloristic effects to which black and white photographs cannot do justice. This architecture was in a literal sense colorful, for the architects made conscious use of the possibilities inherent in the stone, which Rott notes was quarried locally at Köpi, a short distance south of Tomarza.³⁹ The masonry courses continued horizontally around the circumference of the building, and this fact was exploited. The greater part of the building was in the warm red color which still distinguishes the Kızıl Kilise near Gelveri and gave that building its name, but the four courses below the stringcourse were in white stone, and on the apse the white stone was used down to the level of the sill. At the west end of the building the lower courses of the wall were in the lighter color. It appears possible, too, that the door frames were distinguished not only by their decoration, but were also picked out in white stone against a red background.⁴⁰ The use of paint on the cornice has already been noted, and one may wonder to what extent it was employed elsewhere since it was used extensively on the church of the Panagia at Pesek,⁴¹ and paint was often enough used to adorn the exteriors of rock-cut churches in the region.

In default of the possibility of personal inspection, one must simply repeat Rott's observations on the building techniques. The exterior walls were built of large, smoothed, squared blocks with very little mortar between the courses, since the vertical and horizontal courses met to a hair's breadth. There were holes for iron cramps in the highest courses.⁴²

³⁹ *Denkmäler*, 185.

⁴⁰ A striking example of the coloristic use of local stone was visible, until recently, in the arch of the apse of the basilica at Till-Köy, south of Nevşehir, where red and white stones were employed alternately. The usage is still current in modern Anatolian building. See Rott, *Denkmäler*, 289, pl. 107.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 185.

The precise purpose of our church must remain in doubt. Krautheimer thought that the Panagia at Tomarza "was perhaps built as a parish church."⁴³ This view merits sympathy especially since the church was the largest, and perhaps the most pretentious, of the Anatolian cross-churches known to us, but it is unfortunately impossible to establish the relationship of Tomarza to any ancient site. We cannot even be sure how near Rott's undated "Totenkammern" were, and illustrations of what he thought was an Early Christian funerary monument do not convince one of the necessary truth of his opinion.⁴⁴ Figures 27 and 28 show the two columns which Rott mentions to the northwest of the church.⁴⁵ One column remained in situ and a second was in two pieces beside it. Rott was convinced that these were the remains of a columnar funerary monument of a type found in northern Syria.⁴⁶ Such a monument would be remarkable in Anatolia, and one may note that the Syrian monuments belonged to the second century, while the columns at Tomarza had heavy, late capitals, and the intact column was adorned on one of its sides with a large cross in high relief, which can hardly, therefore, be a secondary feature. Rott's conclusion seems improbable but on the evidence available it would be rash to propose any alternatives. The appearance of columns in a Christian context in a region distinguished by its use of monolithic piers is itself remarkable. Thus, it is not possible to show definitely that the church was associated with a cemetery, or, more specifically, that it might be a memorial church associated with an important sepulchral monument.⁴⁷

The church of the Panagia at Tomarza was the largest Anatolian cross-church known to us, and was a monument of considerable artistic distinction in a province not usually noted for excellence in the decoration of its buildings. Decoratively and architecturally, a date in the first half of the sixth century seems most appropriate for the church at Tomarza, and this may serve as a basis from which to consider the other, less distinguished churches in the surrounding district. The church at Tomarza was an important representative of a group of monuments which has now almost disappeared. Thus the loss of the building is tragic, particularly when followed by the destruction of the similar church of the Forty Martyrs at Küçük Bürüngün. The fortunate preservation of the archive presented here compensates to some extent for the loss of the fabric of the building, and its publication now represents the realization of an intention expressed by Gertrude Bell some sixty-five years ago.

⁴³ Krautheimer, *op. cit.*, 123.

⁴⁴ Rott, *Denkmäler*, 187.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* He provides measurements for the base (0.40 m.), and the column from base to capital (3.15 m.).

⁴⁶ Butler, *Architecture*, 59–63.

⁴⁷ Local tradition is reported to have connected Tomarza with St. Basil of Caesarea, and it appears that in comparatively recent times St. Mary was especially celebrated there. "Upon the outskirts of the village there is believed to have existed at the time of St. Basil the Great a 'baptismal pool,' near which the Greeks erected seven large crosses, the upper arm of only one of which protrudes from the ground today, and upon which an Armenian inscription was added by King Appasian of Kars... who settled here in the year 1065.... He it was who built three churches side by side, the centre one dedicated to the Virgin and the two others to St. Peter and St. Paul respectively. Although the place is derelict today, I secured an early photograph showing a pilgrimage at the monastery, which used to take place annually on August 15, being the festival of the Assumption of Our Lady." E. H. King, "A Journey through Armenian Cilicia," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 24 (1937), 234–46, esp. 238. This may explain Rott's attribution of the earlier church to the "Panagia."